Art Amid Front Line Fighting Yields Results Despite Odds

Living Models Blown to Bits Sketches Destroyed and Wounded Hand Incidents of S. J. Woolf's Experience

Exhibition at Milch Galleries Shows War in Its Horrors, Though the Collection of 100 Paintings and Charcoals Includes Several Portraits

"IN NO MAN'S LAND."

By FRANK WARD O'MALLEY.

THAT æsthetic serenity which popularly is supposed to flood the soul of genius when in the throes of creative art is sure to go all to pot if a high explosive shell, just when the artist is dabbing at his picture, goes off close by with a roar like the racket in a South Boston Democratic convention when the committee on contested seats begins to try to throw out the undesirables.

High powered interruptions of that kind not only play hob with the artist's nerves but also with the picture. Even if both artist and picture are not instantly obliterated the dynamic interruption is sure to play the deuce with the half finished painting or drawing; the artist ducks and his picture flops—always face downward—into the mud of the fighting trench. Once a picture has been buried even half a foot in French mud it hasn't a chance any place thereafter outside of the cubist-futurist picture show which John Sloan, Jimmy Gregg and the Society of Independent Artists pull off under the very noses of the New York police each year.

Not once does Ruskin in all three volumes of his "Modern Painters" devote so much as a chapter to the subject of "How to Paint War Stuff Under Fire and Get Away With It"—not even a line. And yet, to judge from the experiences of the accomplished young American painter and illustrator S. J. Woolf, who has painted and drawn the great war from A to Izzard, no didactic treatise on pictorial art henceforth can hope to be complete without exhaustive directions as to protective styles in artists' tin hats and chain armor and suggestions as to the best methods for waterproofing, fireproofing and shock absorbing one's canvases.

Above all, the fighting front is no place for china painting. When young Mr. Woolf, for instance, was nicked on the hand by shrapnel while making a thumbnail oil sketch in the midst of the fighting at Seicheprey on April 21 last, the shrapnel merely bounced off his bones and cut the oil sketch into two equal parts. If a canvas is cut in half any seamstress can stitch it together again as good as new, or if shrapnel splits a painting on wood apart, all one has to do is to have the town carpenter repair it along the rear elevation with some tenpenny nails and a cleat. But if a high explosive gets mixed up with a china sugar bowl, partly decorated with hand painted pink roses—blooey! Ruin, just ruin, that's all!

In the catalogue of the exhibition of more than 100 paintings and drawings which Mr. Woolf made at the front during the war and is now showing—until Feb. 15—at the Milch Galleries, 108 West Fifty-seventh street, there is a foreword by A. E. Gallatin in which Mr. Gallatin dwells on the item that the artist's heated experiences at the front "saturated Mr. Woolf with his subject of modern war." Mr. Gallatin, who is chairman of the committee on exhibitions of the Committee on Public Information, division of pictorial publicity, isn't guilty of hyperbole—certainly not in the opinion of Mr. Woolf and his home folks.

For the artist, while pursuing æsthetic loveliness along the American fighting fronts in France during the late spring and early summer of 1918, was gassed at Rambucourt; had to sleep for several nights in a first aid station to the lullaby of clinging surgical instruments and the groans of the wounded a few feet away. Three soldiers, all American boys, were blown to death by a high explosive beside Mr. Woolf near Seicheprey as he and the three doughboys raced across a field together in the general direction of Germany.

A moment later shrapnel ripped open the artist's hand, but he thought so little of the wound that he dressed it himself and forgot the experience until, more than a week later, an American army surgeon insisted upon removing the amateur bandaging and giving the wound more scientific treatment.

Again Mr. Woolf indirectly was compelled by the Huns, on another occasion, to turn cook for several days. While billeted with some officers of the 26th Division a shell came through a window and laid out the cooks, whereupon Mr. Woolf and a Massachusetts chaplain, the Rev. Father O'Connor of the 101st Infantry, for some days had to forget things of æsthetics and the soul and rustle up meals for the officers of the line.

"And in my way I made fairly good as a cook, even if I don't know anything beyond boiling water," said Mr. Woolf when encountered in the peaceful atmosphere of Mr. Woolf's warlike exhibition at the Milch Galleries one day last week. "In all modesty I can say that I was even a better cook than my culinary colleague, Chaplain O'Connor. I could't cook a bit better than he, but I could steal better."

"Steal?"

"Well, maybe steal is too harsh a word. When it came to getting the first meal, you see, Chaplain O'Connor and I persuaded each other to confess that we didn't know how to make toast, tea, or boil an egg. I whispered to the chaplain, who is a very saintly man, that I knew of a cook shack so close to our cookless kitchen that if we were to wander in there and pretend to be helping them with the kitchen work we could run back to our kitchen with their cooked food and serve it before the swiped stuff had a chance to get cold.

"But this Chaplain O'Connor not only was very familiar with the Commandments, but always kept them, even in time of war temptations. I tried to drag him down to my own level, even taking him over near enough to the rival cook shack to get a whiff of some roasting turkeys that the real cooks nearby had got hold of somehow. Nothing doing. So I framed it up to have the chaplain sent on a foraging trip for hardtack or something.

"It was Easter, I remember. Chaplain O'Connor started off on his errand and, when he was out of sight, I hotfooted it off on a little errand of my own. I shall delete the details of my trip. But I'll say this for myself—when Chaplain O'Connor came in sight fifteen minutes later he 'discovered' me in the act of removing from our old cook stove the finest, juiciest, best browned turkey our mess ever had eaten, at home or abroad.

"That was the swiftest cooking I ever did—about 100 yards in eleven and a fraction seconds, which isn't so slow when you stop to remember that I was handicapped with about twelve extra pounds of hot turkey on the home trip."

"But didn't the saintly chaplain think it strange that——"

"He thought it was the best cooked turkey he ever had eaten. What else he thought I don't know. And that turkey, which I alone procured, cooked and served in a fraction under fifteen minutes, made such a hit with the officers that they decided then and there to give me the Distinguished Service Cross. But on Easter Monday, not daring to go back to the cook shack near by, I tried to cook a meal unassisted. The mess not only decided not to give me a decoration but also threw me out of the kitchen."

Thereafter Mr. Woolf tried to forget his failure as a cook by devoting himself to pictorial art between explosions. A glance at the many walls of his paintings and drawings now on display at the Milch Galleries prove immediately to the discerning that the army was all wrong in trying to make a bad cook out of a very good draughtsman and colorist.

Also it is evident from the present exhibition that Mr. Woolf blends an immense amount of industry with his talents and technical facility. He has painted and sketched the great war from his "Ready to Go In," which is No. 81 at his present picture show, to "Home Again" (No. 110). The "Home Again" number is the only picture in the exhibition that, geographically speaking, has to do with an American subject.

Mr. Woolf made the drawing, which is a stirring sketch in charcoal of a troopship arriving here and wonderfully expressive of the close massed humans and the hurrah of a transport docking in home waters, to illustrate an article soon to appear in the *Red Cross Magazine*.

Nowhere will one find in the Woolf exhibition a hint of the false, dress parade, mock heroics side of war which, unfortunately, was fed by the square mile to America during or immediately after our former wars, or back in the days when pictorial realism had not yet begun to fold and put permanently on the shelf the highly tailored "art" of a silly period. There isn't a painting or drawing in the present show at the Milch Galleries which

"IN FULL MARCHING ORDER"

"HIS BUDDY"

Paris, bought a little thumb box outfit, and rushed back again among the bullets, the only civilian at the front with official permission to draw and paint what he saw.

He saw much. For four months he lived and worked amid horrors, suffering and sudden death at the hot spots along the St. Mihiel sector, at Seicheprey, Xivray, Apremont, Rambucourt, and other places where the supply of superheated warmth did not depend upon the whim of a studio apartment janitor.

Even the busiest men of the war seemed to have been able between bangs to give sittings to the young American artist while the war was at its worst. Number 21 in the present exhibition is a splendidly "modelled" portrait in oil of Gen. Pershing, excellent in color and tone, for which Gen. Pershing gave sittings to Mr. Woolf during far scattered leisure moments at the American headquarters in Paris.

Mr. Woolf persuaded about a dozen rude cross and the splash of black wings where a wind blown in sinister crow circles against the leaden sky, perhaps has gripped the attention of visitors to the show more than any picture in the collection.

The reason for its hold on the visitors is easy to understand; the visitors who "don't know anything about art but what they like" are held by the picture because of the tragic gloom of the subject, and visiting artists stand contemplatively before the canvas because technically the painting is a most praiseworthy contribution to contemporary American art.

Scattered throughout the exhibition are dozens of charming bits of martial genre in oil or charcoal and larger works of a high average of merit, to which is lent an added interest to even the inartistic because of the nature of the subjects. Altogether the exhibition is attractive to a wide variety of picture lovers, from the learned who appreciates technique to the parent who knows nothing about art but "knows what he likes," and besides, has a son still over there.

Birds as Tacticians In Self-Defence

IT has been pointed out that the military tactics which a commander may employ to deceive the enemy are practised in a limited way by many birds.

There is nothing more interesting in the study of bird life than the efforts to deceive which many species put forth to save their young or their nests from the despoiler. They flutter just in front of the trespasser to attract his notice, and then they trail off with a "broken" wing dragging on the ground, emitting cries of distress.

The bobwhite (commonly called quail) is a most notable tactician in this kind of deception. This bird is physically helpless in the face of danger, possessing no weapons. Its power of swift flight for a short distance is great, but when there are little bobwhites to protect, the mother will not leave them. The nest is always on the ground, and the eggs are thus peculiarly open to the ravages of snakes and other enemies.

There are sometimes a score of eggs, sharply pointed at one end and round at the other, so that space in the nest is economized. The chicks quit their birthplace before they are fairly out of the shell.

They inherit a knowledge of the family vernacular, and each little head about the size of a pea, holds quick perception and resolute will. If danger threatens the brood, the mother bird calls. The young all "go dead" instantly; they drop down wherever they chance to be at the moment. A man or a boy might step on them; they are almost invisible among the dry leaves and grass. The mother bird renders herself very conspicuous, fluttering with a "broken wing."

The morning dove is another timid and helpless creature; she also uses the broken wing ruse to divert danger from her nest. The dove acquires the "broken wing habit" of deception

Premier Clemenceau's Love Romance in America

When the Tiger, a Professor, Wooed Miss Plummer, His Pupil, in Stamford School

THE love romance of the youth of Clemenceau—Clemenceau the Tiger, pilot of France, as her Premier, to victory and now chairman of the world Peace Conference at Versailles—had its background in this country and an American girl for its heroine. To be more exact, the scene was Stamford, Conn.; to localize it still further, Miss Aiken's Seminary for Young Ladies, then a show cultural feature of the old south shore Connecticut town.

As is well known, the young Clemenceau, a doctor by profession, a journalist on the side and a radical lover of liberty first, last and all the time, had come to the United States during the civir war period. He came to breathe free air. His need of it was a matter of practical urgency. The Government of Napoleon III., which—and whom—the young man despised and challenged, did not approve of youthful firebrands who on revolutionary anniversaries organized a parade of their fellow university students to march around the Place of the Bastile shouting "Long live the Republic!"

That Clemenceau had done; he had also done two months in consequence. Getting out, he was permitted to finish his course and take his medical degree, after which, there are grounds for believing, it was intimated to him that the air of France under the Third Empire was likely not to agree with his constitution. The Tiger cub wasn't afraid, but he was sensible. He meant to live to see France permanently free and to play a role in bringing it about.

He came to New York, making his home with William E. Marshall, an American artist and engraver, whose portrait engraving of Washington exhibited at the Louvre had caught the eye of Clemenceau's republican passion. The address was 711 Broadway. Clemenceau brought with him letters of introduction to Horace Greeley, which he never presented, so far as records show.

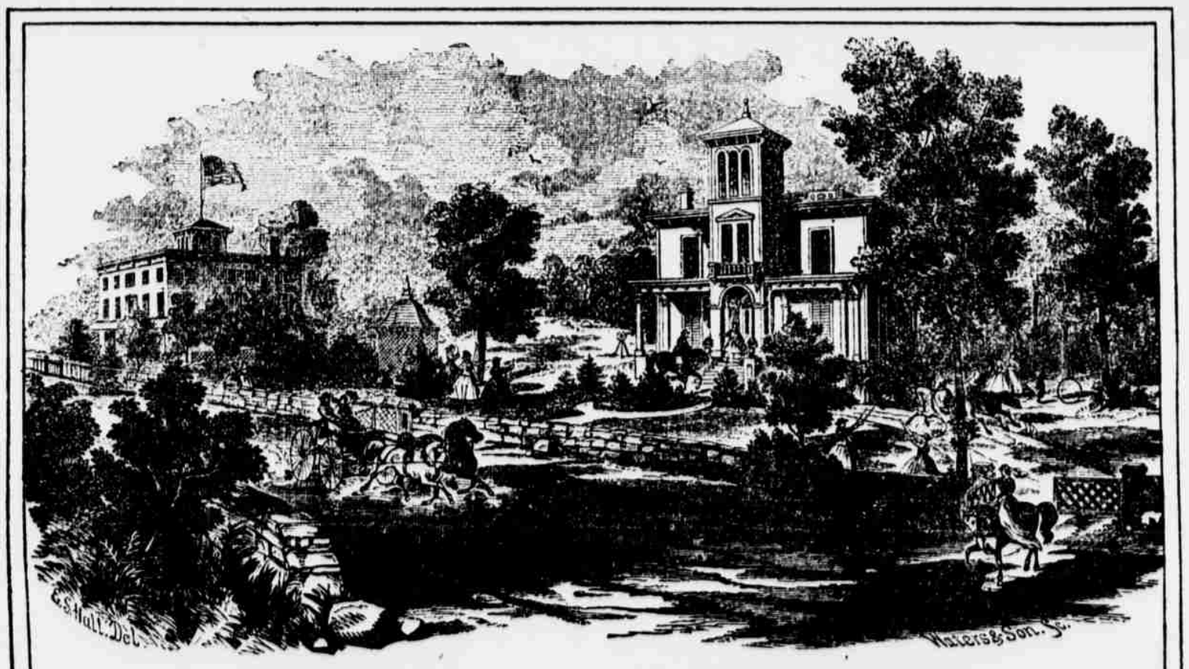
Later he took a house for himself in West Twelfth street and hung out a shingle. He wrote home that he had quickly noticed two things—the Americans had "no general ideas and no good coffee." His practice no more interfered with his career than did Dr. Watson's, and he spent his time travelling and writing until, being short of funds, he obtained, through a Greenwich Village friend named Eugene Bush, a place as teacher of French in the finishing school in Stamford conducted by Miss Catherine Aiken. As always in schools of its kind French was in great request.

Clemenceau, far from playing tiger in the dovecote, showed himself an excellent, satisfactory and thoroughly tranquil teacher. One of his pupils may have had something to do with it. She was Miss Mary E. Plummer, orphaned daughter of a doctor in Springfield, Mass. At the time she elected young Dr. Clemenceau's course it was said of her that she was the one girl in the school who wasn't engaged.

It may or may not be Clemenceau and Miss Plummer who are represented in the foreground of the picture as taking a drive behind a pair of spanking trotters. They speedily fell in love, but Clemenceau's sense of propriety withheld his declaration until his sweetheart was graduated and had come of age. After that he had to make two flying trips to France to get his own family's consent.

He married Miss Plummer in the New York City Hall on June 23, 1869. The Mayor, Oakey Hall—within two years to become notorious through the Tweed exposures—officiated. Clemenceau selected him, not as "Elegant Oakey" but as Mayor, because he himself did not believe in a religious ceremony. Shortly after the marriage he took his bride to France. They lived together more than twenty years. By this American wife Clemenceau had two sons and a daughter. In 1892 the couple were divorced.

The Aiken school in Stamford was originally established on Henry street in 1855. In 1862 it was removed to Clark's Hill, where it was in Prof. Clemenceau's time. Still later it was removed again, to a building called Gothic Hall, and yet again to what is now the site of the Congregational church. The illustration of it is an old woodcut, taken from a book that was published in 1868.



Miss Aiken's Seminary for Young Ladies, Stamford, Connecticut.

"BACK TO REST BILLETS"

Once in France he healed immediately for front line trenches, where he found the painting equipment he had brought along was impracticable in fighting zones. He hurried back to Paris, bought a little thumb box outfit, and rushed back again among the bullets, the only civilian at the front with official permission to draw and paint what he saw.

He saw much. For four months he lived and worked amid horrors, suffering and sudden death at the hot spots along the St. Mihiel sector, at Seicheprey, Xivray, Apremont, Rambucourt, and other places where the supply of superheated warmth did not depend upon the whim of a studio apartment janitor.

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Mr. Woolf persuaded about a dozen famous warriors to pose for him also. Eight of these portraits, all drawn in charcoal and distinguished for their feel for character, are hung at Mr. Woolf's exhibition at the Milch Galleries; the subjects being Marshal Joffre and American officers that include Gens. Liggett, Bullard, Coe, Edwards and Alexander, and Cols. L. M. Lowell and Edward L. Logan. All the portraits, except, of course, the painting of Pershing, are autographed by the subjects, thus adding a historical value as war records to drawings of much æsthetic worth.

A drawing on the theme of showing a gloomy stretch of storm swept field and sky that are relieved only by a is likely to call up even vague memories of the "Washington Crossing the Delaware."

Mr. Woolf went abroad primarily to make drawings for a magazine about the time that Haig had his "back to the wall" and things looked gloomy for democracy. Being unable to get credentials which would permit him to go to France solely as an artist, he persuaded the War Department to let him go as a correspondent entitled to make paintings and drawings.

while the tribe yet nested on the ground. The habit persists, although rather ludicrous when exercised on the bough of a tree or on the top rail fence.

The domestic goose is derived from wild species. The pioneer settlers put their domestic geese run wild in bushes and almost revert to their primitive state. Now the goose constructs a very pretentious nest only a ground. The eggs are so large and white that they would attract the friendly notice of a conspicuous creatures. To avoid this danger they keep the eggs and carefully cover over when the owner leaves them even for a short time.